(c) No final decision has so far been taken by the Government of Orissa on the proposal of Pohang Steel Company of South Korea.

Customs duty on steel

4015. SHRI MURLI DEORA:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the steel industry has asked Government to increase the customs duty on seconds and defectives to 40 per cent from 20 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) view taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Indian Steel Alliance, which represents the main steel products (except TISCO) has requested for restoration of 40% customs duty on seconds and defectives.

(c) The customs duty on prime non-alloy steel and prime alloy steel is 5% and 10% respectively. A reasonable duty differential of 15% with prime non-alloy steel and 10% with prime alloy steel is maintained even after the duty on seconds and defectives has been lowered from 40% to 20%. Thereforer in the present circumstances the Government does not consider it necessary to restore customs duty on seconds and defectives to 40%.

Employment *vis-a-vis* exploration of Iron Ore

†4016. SHRI ISAM SINGH: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that proper exploration of Iron ore in Orissa can provide employment to about 2 crore persons; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the view of Government in this regard and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. As per Indian Bureau of Mines, the total reserve of iron ore in Orissa is 4177 million tones as on 1.4.2000. In the year 2003-04, 30 million tones of iron ore was extracted from Orissa employing 36, 633 persons per day. At the current level of mechanization, if all the reserves ore open for mining, it will generate prorata employment of 51 lakh persons. However, experience of iron ore mining indicate that in large mines, there is more mechanisation & lesser direct employment. Mining is an independent economic activity & Government has no control over production & employment in this sector. The same is determined by market forces.

Rationalising Steel Prices

†4017. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government feel the necessity of rationalising the continuously increasing prices of steel in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken any steps in this direction; and

(c) if so, the details of the steps and if rationalisation of prices is not necessary whether it would be in the interest of the nation to allow the prices of steel to go up unchecked in the country?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.